Thar express from Jodhpur to Munabao

*351. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS. be pleased to state:

(a) what is the status of the Thar Express from Jodhpur to Munabao;

(b) what steps are being taken to increase its occupancy; and

(c) what are the road blocks, if any?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) It is a weekly train. It runs once a week *i.e.* on every Saturday.

(b) and (c) The Train runs to full occupancy. It caters only to through international passengers with valid travel documents.

Contract farming

*352. SHRI P.R. RAJAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a working group had been set up by National Development Council for contract farming;

(b) if so, the details including the status of the above and the decisions, if any, as on today;

(c) if so, the details of crops apd regions associated with contract farming, private companies/multinational corporations associated with above contract farming, employment generated/to be generated and diversification of crops adopted, if any, crop-wise, State-wise and region-wise as on today;

(d) whether there is any proposal for State regulation, intermediation and monitoring of contract farming;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (f) The Planning Commission had set up a Working Group of the Sub-Committee of the National Development Council (NDC) on Agriculture and Related Issues relating to Marketing Reforms, Contract Farming and Agro-Processing Sector on 02.12.2005 under the Chairmanship of the Chief Minister of Punjab with the Terms of Reference (ToR) as given in the enclosed Statement-I (*See* below).

The Report of the Working Group was discussed in the meeting of the Sub-Committee of NDC on Agriculture and Related Issues on 18.04.2007 and subsequently its recommendations were considered by the National Development Council in its 53rd Meeting on 29.05.2007. NDC has resolved in the meeting that State Governments would encourage development of modern markets by completing the process of amending their Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMC) Acts and notify the rules thereunder and would also encourage